

VZCZCXRO8180
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #1260/01 1981054
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 161054Z JUL 08
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2141
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001260

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/15/2018
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: HEBRON'S OLD CITY

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Jessica Lapenn, per reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: On July 11, PolOffs visited Hebron's newly rebuilt Chazon David "synagogue outpost" (removed 33 times by Israeli security forces), the Beit Hashalom (Rajabi House) complex that houses 20 families, and the Beit Romano yeshiva complex where Israeli MOD Barak recently approved a new dormitory. Hebron settler spokesman David Wilder and Hebron Old City settler rabbi Yisrael Shlissel accompanied PolOffs and complained about living conditions in Hebron, including restrictions on their movement. They threatened that any attempt to remove them will result in violence, because "we won't leave here alive." End summary.

¶2. (C) On July 11, PolOffs visited Hebron settlers David Wilder and Rabbi Yisrael Shlissel in Hebron's Old City where 1,740 Israeli security forces protect some 800 settlers. (Note: There are 550 permanent settlers, including 300 children, and 250 yeshiva students). Wilder urged PolOffs to encourage other diplomatic envoys to meet with Hebron settlers, complaining that diplomats talk only with Palestinians and activists. (Note: There have been several recent confrontations between settlers and visitors, including German Parliamentarian and South African human rights delegations, the French Deputy Consul General, Israeli MKs, and LTG Fraser's convoy, in which a USG vehicle was damaged. End note).

Outpost Synagogue: Repeatedly Rebuilt

¶3. (C) Wilder showed PolOffs the Chazon David "outpost synagogue," which was evacuated and dismantled some 33 times and rebuilt each time by settlers. Chazon David is a post-March 2001 outpost that the GOI has pledged to dismantle. On July 11, the outpost included a makeshift structure draped in green tarp and adorned with a plywood star of David, Inside were rows of benches, prayer books and a torah. The outpost did not appear to be used for overnight stays. Adjacent to the site, international monitors escorted Palestinian farmers tending to agricultural land. Wilder said he is unsure of the status of the land around Chazon David but he thinks "it must be State land." ICRC told PolOffs July 15 that the land is owned by a neighboring Palestinian family.

House of Peace

¶4. (C) Wilder showed PolOffs Beit Hashalom (Rajabi House) or "House of Peace," the 40,000 square foot building occupied by settlers since March 2007 and whose sale by Palestinians to settlers the High Court of Justice is reviewing for suspected fraud (reftel). The building is on a hill across a narrow valley from Kiryat Arba settlement (pop. 6,000). Palestinians inhabit the valley and adjacent buildings. PolOffs observed three IDF soldiers guarding the building

that houses twenty families. The structure is unfinished; floors and walls are made of exposed, unfinished concrete, and plastic sheets cover door and window frames. Electricity (for which there is no permit) comes from a line rigged to buildings nearby.

15. (C) Israeli security forces have defensive posts on the roof of the complex. Wilder said the IDF will not act against Hebron settlers, given the settlements' strategic defensive positions. Israeli peace activists publicly accuse settlers of using the roof as a platform to throw objects at Palestinians, and local press have aired footage of rock throwing from the building's rooftop, captured on video by Palestinians carrying a camera provided by the Israeli NGO B'Tselem.

Beit Romano

16. (C) Wilder showed PolOffs the Beit Romano yeshiva (religious school) four-story complex housing 250 students in Hebron's Old City center. Wilder confirmed that MOD Barak recently approved construction of a new dormitory, which press reported will be 6-7 stories. Wilder noted that unlike Hebron's other settlers, the yeshiva students "are well-connected with Israeli political parties."

Rough Neighborhood

17. (C) Wilder and Shlissel complained that they have access to only three percent of Hebron's overall area, alleging that

JERUSALEM 00001260 002 OF 002

Palestinians have "free reign" of Hebron. Of the 550 full-time settlers in Hebron's old city, Wilder told PolOffs that 300 are children. Shlissel said his three-year-old son is "scared to walk three minutes to school" on Shuhada street. Shlissel's home and synagogue are across the street from the "caged house," which was publicized in January 2007 when B'Tselem released a video of settlers taunting and verbally abusing its residents who live surrounded by a protective cage. Wilder and Shlissel said the cage structure is purely "for propaganda." Shlissel said the forced eviction of settlers "would mean war," adding "we won't leave here alive."
LAPENN